

Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 OMB-01 CG-00 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /117 W

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R 141047Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2173

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

S E C R E T DACCA 0722

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, IO, BG

SUBJECT: SUPPORT OF US NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

REF: STATE 28352; DACCA 476 AND 553

1. US NAVAL ACTIVITY IN THE NORTHERN REACHES OF THE BAY OF BENGAL, A SHIP VISIT TO A BENGALEE PORT, OR CARRIER BASED AIRCRAFT LANDING IN OR OVERFLIGHT OF BENGALBN H WOULD PROVOKE A SHARP AND ADVERSE BDG RESPONSE. A NAVAL INITIATIVE COULD SLOW OR REVERSE THE PRESENT FAVORABLE TREND IN AMERICAN-BENGALEE RELATIONS.

2. WHILE OFFICIAL BDG REACTIONS TO DISTANT DIEGO GARCIA HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY MILD, A MORE TANGIBLE US NAVAL PRESENCE CLOSER TO BENGALEE SHORES WOULD SPARK A SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT RESPONSE. THE DISPATCH OF THE USS ENTERPRISE INTO THE BAY OF BENGAL DURING THE 1971 INDO-PAK WAR IS STILL FRESH ON BENGALEE MINDS AND US NAVAL ACTIVITY IN THE AREA CONTINUES TO EVOKE MEMORIES OF THE WORST PERIOD IN BENGALEE-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THE BDG SUPPORTS THE PRINCIPLE OF AN INDIAN OCEAN "ZONE OF PEACE". EVEN THOUGH IT MAY PRIVATELY WISH TO SEE A BETTER BALANCE OF GREAT POWER INTERESTS IN THE SUBCONTINENT, THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO DEFEND ITS

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COMMITMENT TO THIS PRINCIPLE. AN AMERICAN NAVAL OVERTURE WOULD

GIVE IT A CHANCE TO DO SO.

3. IF INTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS DID NOT SUFFICE, INDIAN AND SOVIET REACTIONS COULD FURTHER STIFFEN THE BENGALLEES' NEGATIVE RESOLVE. THE BDG WOULD GIVE GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE WAY INDIA CHOSE TO DEAL WITH AN AMERICAN VISIT. THE SOVIETS, AS WE ARGUED IN DACCA 476, HAVE INVESTED IN A PREEMPTIVE POLITICAL IF NOT A NAVAL PRESENCE IN BANGDESH'S PRINCIPAL PORT AND COULD BE COUNTED ON TO REACT ADVERSELY TO A NAVAL VISIT. THEY HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO INFLUENCE A BDG DECISION IF SUCH WERE NECESSARY.

4. THE TREND IN US-BDG RELATIONS OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS IS FAVORABLE TO US. CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE TILT HAS FADED. THE REGIME HAS SOUGHT A BETTER BALANCE IN ITS EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND A GREATER DEGREE OF CORDIALITY IN ITS DEALINGS WITH US. A US NAVAL INITIATIVE COULD WELL UPSET THIS POSITIVE TREND.

5. THE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES OF USING CHITTAGONG HARBOR ARE SPELLED OUT IN DACCA 553.

NEWBERRY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NAVAL FORCES, NAVAL SHIPS, MILITARY BASES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974DACCA00722
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: DACCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740233/aaaabewh.tel
Line Count: 81
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: STATE 28352; DACCA 476 AND 553
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 JUN 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <13 JAN 2003 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SUPPORT OF US NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
TAGS: MARR, IO, BG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005